

MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SEMINAR II

Theme: “The Foundations for Pentecostal Faith and Practice”

The Virtuous Woman

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*A Virtuous Woman (a wife of noble character) - Who can find her?
She is worth far more than rubies.*

I. A WIFE OF NOBLE CHARACTER

It is essential that a minister's wife be a woman of noble character. The NIV translates a “virtuous woman” as a “woman of noble character” (Proverbs 31:10). This Scripture describes a woman with emotional strength and high morale; a woman who develops her resources and abilities; a woman of great integrity; a woman who is fruitful in life and ministry.

A minister's wife is placed under great pressure and tension. It is as though she lives in a fish bowl and constantly on display. Extraordinary expectations are placed upon her. A minister's wife is expected to be:

- Christlike - always manifesting love and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Positive under pressure without becoming critical
- A role model for all women - she is to be a gracious helpmate, consecrated, dedicated, genuine, interested, discreet, trustworthy, kind, and friendly
- Physically fine tuned - she should be energetic; hard working; and physically fit, by taking time to be good to herself with a proper amount of rest, recreation, and diet

- Lovable - a wife who is easy to love and able to return love. Her love is also to be pure and unconditional. A love that conquers all.

II. A WIFE OF COURAGEOUS LOVE

Supernatural joy, deep purity, and passionate love are in short supply even in our Christian communities and ministry couples. Some ministers' wives are better at singing about joy than really experiencing the joy of the Lord. They are sometimes inclined to accept and even ignore their faults and the impurities of their spouse and/or marriage rather than to confront the pain. A minister's wife may learn to deny or simply live with the pain in her soul when deep love and respect has disappeared from her marriage.

A. The Risks and Dangers of Courageous Love

1. The Risks

C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *Four Loves*, "Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it in tact, you must give it to no one. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."

Every minister's wife faces the risk of being hurt and broken because of attempting to love people. It is vital for her, and her husband as well, to remember that the ministry of the church is to some people who are sick, troubled, and dysfunctional. People like this will often break your heart. They will behave in foolish and evil ways due to their incompleteness and dysfunction.

Unless you are prepared for these hurts and keep them in perspective, they will break your spirit.

2. The Dangers

The dangers of courageous love include becoming codependent, depressed, or even mentally wounded. These are dangerous times to really love people. With some people who are addictive or self-destructive, we find ourselves in a codependent way trying to control their lives and love them into changing. Out of love we nag, lecture, scream, cry, beg, coerce, protect, try to please, talk mean to, talk mean about, pray for miracles, pay for miracles, go places we don't want to go, write letters to, advise, teach lessons to, reward, punish, almost give up on, then try even harder. (*Codependent No More, Melody Beattie*).

Really loving people is a dangerous thing because we often care too much, if that is possible. We are not only people who "make things happen," but people who even try to "force things to happen." If we are not careful, we will set ourselves up for hurt and disappointment; all in the goal of being a loving person and trying to help hurting people.

III. A WIFE OF HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

The tension and responsibility of a minister's wife can at times be overwhelming. This tension explains why the two main concerns expressed by women are low self-esteem and depression.

Our self-perception is largely formed by what we think other people think of us. The most significant people in our lives have shaped our self-image. We know that our self-image should be based on God's unconditional love for us. However, it is difficult to feel good about yourself when you have been abused, neglected, used, or ignored. As children, we bear the shame and guilt of our parents as they project onto us the blame for their anger

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and sins. We "make them mad," "cause them to lose control," etc. We then internalize the shame and develop a low self-esteem. There are many sources of tension which attack the self-esteem of a minister's wife.

Many factors can contribute to low self-esteem in a minister's wife. There are some positive steps a minister's wife can take to deal with these sources of stress and discouragement. Some steps are as follows:

A. Say the Right Things When You Talk to Yourself -- Forgive Yourself

We must learn to build our faith and to program our mind with a more successful "new picture" of ourselves.

The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, (ladies also) whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report. If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

We talk to ourselves all the time. Most of our self-talk is unconscious; we are not aware of it. The devil wants us to think bad about ourselves and believe his lies. The more bad thoughts we have about ourselves, the more we open ourselves to other self-criticism. The longer we entertain the thought, the truer it seems to become.

We must stop building in our minds walls of self-doubt and self-criticism, forgive ourselves, and start fresh with the love and acceptance of God filling our life.

Thinking on these things (Philippians 4:8) reminds us that:

- we can program new beliefs in our mind
- beliefs create attitudes
- attitudes create feelings
- feelings determine actions
- actions create results

A positive thought life and prayer life opens the door of our mind to the

control of the Holy Spirit to make us the person God has created us to be.

It is important that we be sensitive to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit; then, speak those truths to ourselves in specific, concise thoughts, which will paint a positive picture of the change in our life that God wants to create.

To change our habits, we must change our minds and our attitudes. As this process continues, we develop the "mind of Christ" and build a high self-esteem.

B. Get Organized and Clarify Priorities

Ministers' wives are often driven compulsively (just as their husbands are) to be good, effective, successful, and thus a perfectionist. We live for others and try to please them. People are so hard to please week after week. One day they think we are the greatest, and the next day they think we are the worst. Please note that it is probably not because of any failure or inconsistency on our part that causes their perception to flip. It is the principle of transference that causes them to flip and project onto us the anger, mistrust, dislike, etc. they feel inside concerning their own relationships.

If we are driven to please people all the time and to live in such a way that they will consistently love and respect us, we will be disappointed. Most people are not mature enough or spiritual enough to be that steady and objective.

The cure for our perfectionism is God's unconditional love. Seldom, if ever, will we feel an unconditional love coming from another human being.

We seek to get organized and clarify our priorities realizing that many people live on the border of disorder. Their priorities and values are out of line. We need is to remove ourselves as far as possible from the epicenter of destruction where the damage is the worst. Radiating out from the epicenter are concentric circles of damage as well. The closer we stand to the center of people's disorder, the more impacted we will be.

Living on the border of disorder is dangerous. It is the result of being a

person (or living with a person) who has destructive habits or impulse control disorders. These habits/disorders cause a person to tend to gratify their immediate desires without regard to consequences. These disorders not only hurt the disordered person, but also their friends, associates, and/or relatives.

If we live on the dangerous borders for years, we will experience confusion, doubt, fear and anger. We will grow weary and become more disorganized in our thinking and lifestyles.

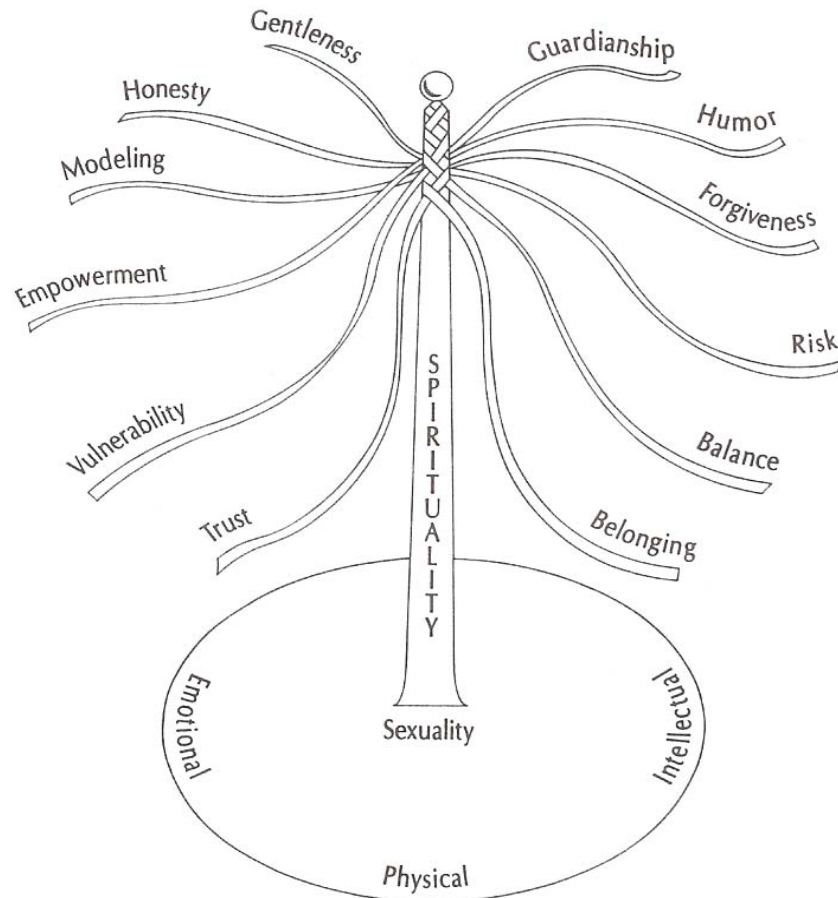
There is hope for hurting people when they get their priorities in place and surround themselves with a network of loving supporting relationships.

C. Find a Balanced and Joyful Life

A minister's wife must recognize her own uniqueness and preciousness as she lives a joyful life of loving and serving others.

The foundation of a woman's identity is her physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and sexual being. Her spirituality is the major structure of her identity rising forth from the foundation of her life. Streaming like ribbons from the pole of spirituality are many characteristics such as love, kindness, and maturity. Other ribbons include:

MAYPOLE DANCE



The figure (above) was designed by Terry Kellogg and Marvel Harrison for their book, *Finding Balance, Priorities for Interdependence and Joyful Living*. In the ambiance of the maypole dance, balance abounds. Balance is needed in all areas of life, commitments, decisions, choices, foods, caring for others, and in taking care of ourselves. Balance with play, work, and relaxation are all important.

Balance is the dance of life. When we feel in balance, steady and sure, we can handle some unexpected twirls without falling. When we feel off-balance, out of step or not in tune, a swirl may result in a serious fall.

The beauty of the maypole is the vibrant, colorful creation of a spiral of life moving from childhood through adulthood. Balance and joyful living requires that a woman flows in harmony and interdependence with God, her family, and all others who are close to her heart.

IV. A WIFE OF LOVE AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY

Whenever someone strives to love with the love of God, they enter into an endeavor that has more possibility of failure than any other enterprise in life. God's standards of love are always higher than ours, leading to a sense of our own incompleteness and self-centeredness. God calls us to love, but unconditional love is developed over a lifetime of struggling to comprehend the personality of God and to conform to God's standard of holiness of life.

A firm trust in God is incredibly important if we are to endure the day-to-day battles of life. We need to know that God is there to encourage us. God enables a bold love to develop in us, which prepares us to live in a world of conflict. He shows us that the way of victory is through love and sacrifice, not hate and greed. As the fruit of the Holy Spirit is produced in us we are increasingly enabled to maintain maturing, emotional stability, and power to overcome life's greatest distresses.

Jesus Christ is the model of the bold love that the Bible gives us to emulate. For us, learning to love and forgive is a process. There are some key qualities of the soul which must be learned over time. Let's look at a few of these qualities:

A. Courage

Joshua 1:5-6—No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an

inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Psalms 27:14—Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

1 Chronicles 28:20—And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God--my God--will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

It is sewn into the fabric of our being that we will courageously defend whatever is most dear to our hearts. A woman will, at all costs, protect her young. Most of our life is sacrificed protecting and enhancing a home that is not our eternal home.

A wife needs a lot of courage and faith to face the reality of this life and the tragedy of sin. Life, hence, must be viewed as a pilgrimage -- a place where we cannot build lasting foundations, but a place to live and love by using our lives to help in forming the joy of Christ in others.

B. Calling

Psalms 20:3—May He remember all your offerings, And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah

Psalms 140:12, 13—I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall

dwell in Your presence.

Psalms 25:9, 10—The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

What am I living for? Is it just to be a good moral person? The Gospel of Christ strikes at the heart of man's annoyance and rage. The Gospel does not settle for good moral living; it requires a radical transformation of the heart.

We have a high calling as Christians. Paul described it in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing . . ."

C. Conviction

Psalms 32:8, 10, 11—I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye...Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Philippians 1:6—...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 25:19—Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.

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Psalms 118:9—It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

Courage prompts us to face reality with a bold love; calling propels us to the front lines of battle; and conviction intensifies our passion to overcome the enemy of our soul.

In order to have a bold love, we must also hate. We must hate sin. Proverbs 3:32 says, "The Lord detests a perverse man." Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us that there are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him:

- Haughty eyes
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked schemes
- Feet that are quick to push into evil
- A false witness who pours out lies
- And a person who stirs up dissension among brothers

A holy life of courage, calling, and conviction will progressively free us from the internal malignancies that rob us of God's love, joy, and peace of mind.

Conclusion

A virtuous woman is a good wife and good person. She is an example of faithful and unconditional love. She impacts, in a life-changing way, everyone who knows her. A virtuous woman demonstrates in all her relationships a loyal love, faithful commitment, careful choices, and great concern for those she loves.